



RESOURCE TITLE:

50-State Comparison: School Leader Certification and Preparation Programs

Research shows school leadership is a pivotal factor in improving student achievement and retaining quality teachers. In fact, among school-related factors, leadership is found to have **one of the greatest impacts** on student learning — second only to classroom instruction. However, many districts are challenged by high rates of turnover, resulting in shortages and inexperienced principals leading high-need schools. As states look at ways to support schools and districts, many turn to policies surrounding preparation and licensure in an effort to better equip leaders entering the field to be successful. States have developed policies, grounded in school leadership standards, to strengthen and increase the number of quality school leaders through traditional and alternative routes to preparation and certification.

Education Commission of the States has researched school leader certification and preparation policies in all 50 states to provide this comprehensive resource. Click on the questions below for 50-State

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Comparisons, showing how all states approach specific policies. Or view a specific state's approach by going to the **individual state profiles** page.

Key Takeaways

- All 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, have adopted standards to guide school leadership policies.
- At least 39 states, plus the District of Columbia, allow for alternative routes to initial school leader certification, either through an innovative or experimental preparation program or through nontraditional paths to certification.
- At least 38 states require field experience as part of traditional school leader preparation programs.
- At least 37 states require candidates to hold a master's degree and have at least three years' teaching or related experience to qualify for an initial school leader certification.

50-State Comparisons

Standards

1. **Has the state adopted leadership standards?**

Preparation

2. **Which state entity approves traditional school leader preparation programs?**
3. **Does state policy require school leader preparation programs to align with adopted standards?**
4. **Does state policy require field experience as part of school leader preparation programs?**
5. **Does state policy allow for innovative or experimental preparation programs?**

Certification and Licensure

6. **What are the initial school leader certification requirements?**
7. **What are the requirements for school leaders licensed out-of-state?**
8. **Is there an alternative route to initial certification?**


- All data points for all states

Related Resources

2017 State Policy Review: School and District Leadership School Leadership: A Primer for State Policymakers


Education Commission of the States is grateful to The Wallace Foundation for its generous support and continued commitment to helping equip states and school districts with the resources to develop strong school leadership policies and practices.

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